

July 'DiRT' from Silver Ridge Park - Westerly Garden Committee 2025

In your mailbox are colorful flyers from lawn-care companies now promising a new service of protection against mosquitos. Some brochures say "The only good mosquito is a dead mosquito". Marketing efforts on these flyers do correctly state that their pesticides are regulated and approved for use by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). That does not mean they are without any negative environmental consequences. These misleading statements push a myth that mosquito sprays are safe for all but their intended targets. There is no way for companies to spray broad-spectrum insecticides in your yard without also killing other insects that the chemicals come in contact with including bees, Monarch butterflies, fireflies and other beneficial insects. Those non-target insects roost, nest and eat the vegetation where the application has been sprayed.

Most residential mosquito control companies use insecticides known as 'pyrethrins', which are chemicals naturally derived from chrysanthemum flowers that are toxic to all insects. More frequently applicators use cheaper, synthetic chemicals that mimic pyrethrins, called 'pyrethroids'. Whether natural or synthetic, these broad-spectrum insecticides are highly toxic to a wide variety of insects, not just to mosquitoes.

Both spray formulas are long-lasting and may continue to harm insects that come in contact with the product days or even weeks later. Also, it can take one-million droplets of insecticide in the air just to reach one adult mosquito! All those extra drops will not only kill any non-target, beneficial insects, but it can also kill dragonflies and crane flies, insects that actually eat mosquitoes!

The most effective and safest ways to control mosquitoes in your yard is through reduction of their breeding areas. Mosquito larvae need to hatch & grow in stagnant water for 7-days to develop into flying adults. So try to regularly drain sources of standing water on your property that can be found accumulated in downspout splashblocks, saucers of potted plants or even a dog food bowl left outside for a week. If you are lucky enough to have an aquatic garden in your backyard with water-loving plants growing in it, make sure you add fish to eat the mosquito larvae.

Saving our local beneficial insects is important to do. Also, keep in mind that here in Silver Ridge Park - Westerly, we older adults are more vulnerable to the effects of aerial insecticide applications due to our slower metabolism which will affect how quickly pesticides are eliminated from our bodies. Lastly, some of us have medical conditions that will make us more sensitive to insecticides.

